

the *Groves* captured 19 surviving pirates, but, unfortunately, by much higher command, was instructed to return them directly to Somalia.

I recently visited the *Groves*, shortly after a previous engagement with the *Jih Chun Tsai* in April. I, personally, commend CDR Matthew Rick and his crew aboard the *Stephen W. Groves* for the work they have done fighting piracy in the Gulf of Aden. Their actions over the weekend eliminated the pirate threat of one mothership, but, unfortunately, there are many more to take out.

Also, on Monday, a helicopter from the USS *Bulkeley* responded to a distress call from the M/V *Artemis Glory*, a German-owned crude carrier. The helicopter crew from the *Bulkeley* saw the pirates firing on the merchant ship and returned fire, sinking the skiff and killing the four pirates aboard.

Also, on Monday, the USS *Bainbridge* responded to a distress call from a cargo carrier, the MSC *Ayala*. After the crew of the *Ayala* repelled a pirate attack, the *Bainbridge* arrived and located the mothership responsible for the attack. The crew made contact with the pirates, who ultimately agreed to abandon the mothership they had hijacked just 4 days before. Ironically, the skiff the pirates tried to flee in sank, and the pirates were rescued by the *Bainbridge*.

I commend the men and women serving on the USS *Stephen W. Groves*, the USS *Bulkeley*, and the USS *Bainbridge* for jobs very well done. My hope in the future is that we can have far more robust rules of engagement, empowering Commander Rick and his fellow commanders to eliminate the threat of piracy.

Of course, this mission would be in the highest traditions of the U.S. Navy and in the tradition of the Jefferson administration, which so ably handled this threat when it emerged in the early part of the 19th century. My only hope is that, in the coming administration review by Secretary of State Clinton, she adopts a more Jeffersonian policy with regard to this threat, so the sealanes, which control 70 percent of the world's supply of oil, and so the ransoms, one-third of which are now being paid to terrorists who operate the largest terror training camps on Earth, can be eliminated.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### STUDENT VOTING

Mr. MANCHIN. Madam President, I rise today to speak about the importance of getting our young people in-

involved in our electoral process and to highlight a West Virginia school with a standout record for going the extra mile to encourage students to register and participate in voting.

I tell young people all the time: You cannot sit on the sidelines and watch life happen. You have to get in the game and start making the calls. The same can be said about our democracy. If you want results, you have to first become an informed and active voter.

Voting is one of the greatest rights the free people of a free nation possess. Over the course of our Nation's history, many have fought tirelessly to gain voting rights. In fact, it was West Virginia's very own Senator Jennings Randolph who relentlessly pushed for the 26th amendment to our Constitution, ensuring those 18 years of age or older had the right to cast a ballot. It took him almost 30 years to get it passed. He started during World War II. It did not pass until 1971.

Each vote matters and the individuals casting those votes matter even more. I know that firsthand because I was honored to serve as West Virginia's highest elections officer, secretary of state. I served from 2000 to 2004.

During my tenure, we established a program called Saving History and Reaching Every Student Program, which was known as the SHARES Program which promoted democracy in West Virginia schools. We registered 42,000 high school students. In my State, so many of the students, if they are 17 years of age but they turn 18 on election day of November 4 or before, can vote in the primary while they are 17. They did not know that. We started promoting it. We had ambassadors. They were all working and trying to get 100 percent of their class eligible to participate—to register and then vote. Then we rewarded them with a school of excellence. My staff and I traveled the State speaking with high school seniors, encouraging them to complete a voter registration form and to participate in our elections.

A decade after that program began, it gives me great pleasure to stand on the Senate floor today and recognize a school—one school—that truly takes it to a whole other level with their students. They took it very seriously as far as democracy and their right and their responsibility to participate.

Every year for the past decade, the staff and the members of Fayette County's Meadow Bridge High School, with their outstanding principal, have registered 100 percent of each senior class. This is truly a remarkable accomplishment. I am unaware of any other school in our great State or across this Nation that has produced voter registration numbers such as those for 10 years in a row. Think of it: Every student in the senior class of this school for 10 years registered to participate.

The school takes important steps such as explaining the registration form, the election process, and the im-

portance of one's vote—all of which go a long way in opening the minds of young adults and showing them that it is easy to become involved, cast a vote, and make a difference.

I have said this to so many young students and the students who come and work with us every day: The most valuable thing you will ever own in your life is your vote. It belongs to you and nobody else. There is only one—your vote. Nobody can take that away from you.

I applaud Meadow Bridge High School's students, faculty, and staff for their commitment to our democracy. I challenge other high schools to follow Meadow Bridge's example.

Let us work together to encourage our Nation's young adults, even more when it comes to our democracy and national issues. This is not a partisan issue, as so many things might be in this body. This is not. It is all of us working together to continue to lead this great country. It is all of us being Americans and that we should support, for the future of our great Nation, this democracy of ours and the freedom to vote.

I am so proud that West Virginia's own Meadow Bridge High School is such a good example, not only for the State of West Virginia but for young students all over this Nation.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FREEDOM IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, I rise today to talk about President Obama's speech today on the support of the Arab spring, at least what we are calling the Arab spring. I believe and hope, as many of my colleagues do, that it is in the best interests of the United States to advance freedom in the Middle East.

Supporting free people and democratic governments has always guided American foreign policy. Lending our support to people who yearn for freedom is really part of our national DNA. Doing so in a practical and pragmatic way within the context of regional stability is imperative to our own national security.

In recent weeks I have been very supportive of the President's actions as they related to Osama bin Laden and the decisions that were made there. In recent months I thought the President has been a little unsteady in advancing the principles I mentioned earlier. He demonstrated uncertainty in dealing with President Mubarak before withdrawing his support and, if I can say so,